

That Ain't in the Book!

We hear a lot of stuff said in meetings that can't be reconciled with the program as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. What follows are some of the things we often hear, along with what the 1st Edition of our basic text has to say on the subject.

This list, along with the corresponding page and paragraph from the Big Book that deals with the subject.

"Remember your last drunk."

"We are unable, at times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink."

Page 24, Paragraph 2

"I choose not to drink today."

"The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink."

Page 24 Paragraph 2

"Play the tape all the way through."

"The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts do occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that

keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove."

Page 24, paragraph 3

"Think through the drink."

"Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power."

Page 43, paragraph 4:

"I will always be recovering, never recovered."

"ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism"

Title Page

"Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body."

Page 20, paragraph 2

"We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body."

Forward, First Edition

"Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered."

⁴ As of January 2011, primarypurposegroup.org is a non-working website.

Page 132, paragraph 2

"We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others."

Page 132, paragraph 3

"We are all just an arm's length away from a drink."

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality - safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us"

Page 84, paragraph 4

"I don't have an alcohol problem, I have a living problem."

"In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete."

Page xxiv, paragraph 2

"Don't drink and go to meetings." "Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

Page 34, paragraph 2

"Whether such a person can quit upon a non-spiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not."

Page 34, paragraph 3

"Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined."

Page 17, paragraph 2

"This is a selfish program."

"Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs."

Page 20, paragraph 1

"Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night."

Page 97, paragraph 2

"For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead."

Page 14-15

"Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles"

Page 62, paragraph 2

"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!"

Page 62, paragraph 3

"Meeting makers make it."

"Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery"

Page 59, paragraph 3

"I'm powerless over people, places, and things."

"We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others."

Page 132, paragraph 3

" Years of living with an alcoholic is almost sure to make any wife or child neurotic. "

Page 122, paragraph 3

"The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough."

Page 89, paragraph 2

"You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail."

Page 103, paragraph 2

"You're in the right place."

"Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason - ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor - becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention."

"If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right- about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him."

Page 20-21

"We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose

yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

Page 31, paragraph 2

"Your husband may be only a heavy drinker. His drinking may be constant or it may be heavy only on certain occasions. Perhaps he spends too much money for liquor. It may be slowing him up mentally and physically, but he does not see it. Sometimes he is a source of embarrassment to you and his friends. He is positive he can handle his liquor, that it does him no harm, that drinking is necessary in his business. He would probably be insulted if he were called an alcoholic. This world is full of people like him. Some will moderate or stop altogether, and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after a while."

Page 92, paragraph 2

"If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic."

"If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience."

Page 95, paragraph 4:

"If an alcoholic wants to get sober, nothing you say can make him drink."

"A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it."

Page 103, paragraph 2

"We must change playmates, playgrounds, and playthings."

"Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. His only chance for sobriety would be some place like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything!"

Page 100-101

"I'm a people pleaser. I need to learn to take care of myself."

"Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind?"

Page 61, paragraph 2

"Don't drink, even if your ass falls off."

"Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

Page 34, paragraph 2

"I haven't had a drink today, so I'm a complete success today."

"The elimination of drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs."

Page 19, paragraph 1:

"It's my opinion that..." or "I don't know anything about the Big Book, but this is the way I do it..."

"We have concluded to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as we see it. We shall bring to the task our combined experience and knowledge. This should suggest a useful program for anyone concerned with a drinking problem."

Page 19, paragraph 1:

"Don't drink, no matter what."

"Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

Page 34, paragraph 2

"We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

Page 31, paragraph 4

"We need to give up planning; it doesn't work."

"On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives. In thinking about our day we may face indecision."

We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while."

Page 86, paragraphs 3-4

"I have a choice to not drink today."

"We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better."

Page 30, paragraph 3

"If all I do is stay sober today, then it's been a good day."

"Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep sober. Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't. But he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated."

Page 82, paragraph 3

"We feel a man is unthinking when he says sobriety is enough."

Page 82 paragraph 4

"You don't need a shrink. You have an alcoholic personality. All you will ever need is in the first 164 pages of the Big Book."

"But this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health

problems to such persons. Most of them give freely of themselves, that their fellows may enjoy sound minds and bodies. Try to remember that though God has wrought miracles among us, we should never belittle a good doctor or psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and in following his case afterward."

Page 133, 2nd paragraph

"AA is the only way to stay sober."

"If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.

page 95, paragraph 4:

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little."

Page 164, paragraph 3

"My sponsor told me that, if in making an amend I would be harmed, I could consider myself as one of the 'others' in Step Nine."

"Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be."

" Page 79, paragraph 2

"I need to forgive myself first" or "You need to be good to yourself."

"The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others."

Page 74, paragraph 2

"Take what you want and leave the rest."

"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news

this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism."

Page 17, paragraph 3:

"Just do the next right thing."

"We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision."

Page 86, paragraph 4:

"Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas."

Page 87, paragraph 1

"Don't make any major decisions for the first year."

"(a) – That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.

(b) – That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.

(c) – That God could and would if He were sought. Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him."

Page 60, paragraph 4

"When ready, we say something like this: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." We have then completed Step Seven."

Page 76, paragraph 2

"Stay out of relationships for the first year!"

"We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct."

Page . 69, paragraph 1

"In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come if we want it."

Page 69, paragraph 3:

"God alone can judge our sex situation."

Page 69, paragraph 4

"Counsel with other persons is often desirable, but we let God be the final judge."

Page 69-70

"We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing."

Page 70, Paragraph 2

"Alcohol was my drug of choice."

"The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink."

Page 24, paragraph 2

"Keep coming back, eventually it will rub off on you."

"Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us"

Page 64, Paragraph 1

"Ninety Meetings in Ninety Days."

"We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek."

Page 15, paragraph 2

"None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we think its effectiveness would be increased if we did."

Page 19, paragraph 2

"Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery"

Page 59, paragraph 3

"You only work one step a year." or "Take your time to work the steps."

"What often takes place in a few months can hardly be brought about by himself alone."

Page 569, paragraph 3

"Next we launched on a course of vigorous action."

Page 63, paragraph 3

"If that is so, this step may be postponed, only, however, if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity"

Page 74, paragraph 2

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for AN HOUR, carefully reviewing what we have done." "Make sure to put something good about yourself in your 4th step inventory."

Page 75, paragraph 3

"First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure."

Page 64 paragraph 3

"The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them."

Page 71 paragraph 1

"If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning."

Page 67 paragraph 3

"You need to stay in those feelings and really feel them."

Page 84, paragraph 2

"When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them."

Page. 125 paragraph 1

"So we think that unless some good and useful purpose is to be served, past occurrences should not be discussed."

"There are no musts in this program."

THE 37 MUSTS

"It must be done if any results are to be expected."

Page 99, paragraph 1

"We must try to repair the damage immediately lest we pay the penalty by a spree."

Page 99, paragraph 2

"It must be on a better basis, since the former did not work."

Page 99, paragraph 3

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead."

Page 83, paragraph 1

"We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone."

Page 83, paragraph 2

"Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it."

Page 74, paragraph 1

"The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others."

Page 74, paragraph 2

"But we must not use this as a mere excuse to postpone."

Page 75, paragraph 1

"But we must go further and that means more action."

Page 85, paragraph 3

"Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities."

Page 85, paragraph 2

"These are thoughts which must go with us constantly."

Page 85, paragraph 2

"If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink."

Page 80, paragraph 1

"I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all."

Page 14, paragraph 2

"Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!"

Page 62, paragraph 3

"The man must decide for himself."

Page 144, paragraph 3

"To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends - this is an experience you must not miss."

Page 89, paragraph 2

"If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind"

Page 33, paragraph 3

"We must not shrink at anything."

Page 79, paragraph 2

"But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others."

Page 86, paragraph 2

"He must redouble his spiritual activities if he expects to survive."

Page 120, paragraph 2

"I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I?"

Page 152, paragraph 2

"He must decide for himself whether he wants to go on"

Page 95, paragraph 3

"If he is to find God, the desire must come from within."

Page 95, paragraph 3

"Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary."

Page 159, paragraph 3

"Both saw that they must keep spiritually active."

Page 156, paragraph 3

"That is where our work must be done."

Page 130, paragraph 2

"Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't."

Page 82, paragraph 3

"He should understand that he must undergo a change of heart"

Page 143, paragraph 2

"Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it."

Page 69, paragraph 4

"We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm"

Page 69, paragraph 4

"We had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life - or else."

Page 44, paragraph 3

"We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them."

Page 78, paragraph 3

"To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action."

Page 93, paragraph 3

"His defense must come from a Higher Power."

Page 43, paragraph 4

"We saw that these resentments must be mastered"

*Page 66, paragraph 4 **But Remember...***

*"For he knows he must be honest if he would
live at all."*

Page 146, paragraph 4

*"We must be entirely honest with somebody if
we expect to live long or happily in this world."*

Page 73, paragraph 5:

*"When the man is presented with this volume it
is best that no one tell him he must abide by its
suggestions."*

Page 144, paragraph 3